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ABSTRACT

Now that the school effectiveness field is maturing, more refined and contextually sensitive observations about schools are possible. This paper focuses on socioeconomic status (SES) as one social context variable demonstrating substantial predictive power in numerous school improvement studies. Instead of viewing middle class behavior as superior and lower class behavior as deficient, this paper explores how human variation may be exploited for the enrichment of all members of society. To this end, data from third-grade classes in 12 urban, suburban, and rural Louisiana school randomly selected districts were gathered during the 1982-83 school year, and six groups of schools were identified: (1) middle-SES effective schools, (2) middle-SES typical schools, (3) middle-SES ineffective schools, (4) low-SES effective schools, (5) low-SES typical schools, and (6) low-SES ineffective schools. In one stage of this study, nine matched pairs of schools selected by regression techniques were examined. While findings disclosed definite similarities between effective middle- and low-SES schools, interesting dissimilarities were also revealed. Compared to their middle-SES counterparts, low-SES effective schools emphasize present expectations; offer more external rewards; hire initiator--instead of manager-principals; buffer schools from negative community influences when more positive outreach fails; hire younger, more idealistic teachers; and concentrate on basic skills. Included are 3 tables and 13 references. (MLH)

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CONTEXTUAL DIFFERENCES IN EFFECTIVE SCHOOLING IN LOUISIANA

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CONTEXTUAL DIFFERENCES IN EFFECTIVE SCHOOLING IN LOUISIANA

Sociologists, psychologists, and educators (e.g., Blumberg, 1972; Brown, 1965; Curtis and Jackson, 1977) have long recognized the existence of different social class or socioeconomic status (SES) groups. A frequently used method for categorizing schools is the SES of the parents of students in those schools.

It is also widely accepted that SES has a variety of measurable effects on the behavior of individuals within various groups. For instance, Cohen and Hodges (1972) found that individuals from lower SES groups have the following characteristics: 1) they have a sense of powerlessness, 2) they feel deprived, and 3) they exhibit insecurity. Perhaps, as a result of these characteristics, their social activity tends to be oriented toward family and away from participation in voluntary organizations.

A reading of the literature on SES and behavior indicates that much research has been undertaken with the assumption that the behavior of the middle class is a standard against which the behavior of other classes is to be judged. Yando, Seitz, and Zigler (1979) refer to this as a "deficit" model in which lower-SES groups are considered inferior to middle-SES groups.

These authors (Yando, Seitz, & Zigler, 1979) go on to reject this deficit model. They state that we should

> ... adopt in its place a difference approach in which no group is considered superior to any other.... A commitment to such a difference approach would urge behavioral scientists, and ultimately laymen, to deal with the central question of how human variation can be exploited for the enrichment of all members of society. (p. 2)

Implicit in this position is the idea that different methods may be needed to optimize outcomes for groups from different social contexts. Recent models (Brookover & Lezotte, 1979; Duckett, Park, Clark, McCarthy, Lotto, Gregory, Herlihy, & Burleson, 1979; Edmonds, 1981; Rutter, Maugham, Mortimore, & Ouston, 1979) based on school effectiveness research have proposed lists of characteristics that should result in school improvement. The same basic set of characteristics appear in the models, primarily because many of the studies were conducted in lower-SES, inner city schools. If the school effectiveness

models are to become more broadly applicable to a variety of social contexts, future models must include evidence from studies conducted in a wider variety of settings.

It is reasonable to suggest that efforts to describe or change a social organization need to be sensitive to the larger social context within which that organization exists. The issue one then faces is determining the critical list of social context variables that make a difference in the organization of interest (that is, schools).

In the current paper, we make no effort to produce an exhaustive list of variables which may be necessary for full contextual understanding of schools. Rather, we will focus on a single variable which has been shown to have substantial predictive power in a variety of studies: socioeconomic status.

The findings are based on four years and two phases of the Louisiana School Effectiveness Study (LSES). We will briefly describe the study and then present several of the major findings. We interpret these findings as suggesting a few universal characteristics of high quality schooling, and several context specific characteristics. Similarities between the findings of LSES and other studies will be noted.

Description of the Second and Third Phases of the Louisiana School Effectiveness Study (LSES-II and LSES-III)

The LSES consists of five phases ranging from a pilot study (1980-82), to a macro level study of 76 randomly selected schools (1982-84), to micro level case studies of 16 schools (1984-86), to a school improvement study, and finally to a model building phase. The data referred to here are from LSES-II and LSES-III.

Data for LSES-II were collected during the 1982-83 school year in the third grade of 76 schools from 12 school districts. The study sample was drawn to be highly representative of the statewide population (Teddlie, Falkowski, Stringfield, Desselle, & Garvue, 1984).

The 12 participating districts included urban, suburban, and rural areas from northern, central, and southern regions of Louisiana. All schools from the districts were stratified on two dimensions: average percent correct on the language test of the Louisiana Basic Skills Test and average educational level of students' mothers. Schools were randomly sampled within these

strata.

The multivariate analysis of variance design for LSES-II included two independent variables: 1) whether the student body of the school came from middle or low SES backgrounds, and 2) whether the student body scored above, at, or below how well they were predicted to score on a norm-referenced test (Educational Developmental Series, lower primary level). This design allowed for the comparison of six groups of schools: 1) middle-SES effective schools, 2) middle-SES typical schools, 3) middle-SES ineffective schools, 4) low-SES effective schools, 5) low-SES typical schools, and 6) low-SES ineffective schools.

A factor analysis of the students' parents socioeconomic data was performed to divide schools in middle- or low-SES groups (Teddlie et al., 1984). A multiple regression model was used to divide schools into those who scored above their predicted score (effective schools), those who scored near their predicted score (typical schools), and those who scored below their predicted score (ineffective schools).

LSES-III (Teddlie & Lauricella, 1986) followed in part the general design of LSES-II. However, two major differences existed: 1) whereas LSES-II consisted mainly of quantitative data collection and analyses, LSES-III focused on a case study approach by including qualitative data collection and analyses, and 2) LSES-III incorporated a classroom-level teacher effectiveness study within a general school effectiveness study. Field research and data collection for LSES-III were conducted during the 1984-85 school session.

At the onset of LSES-III, the research team decided to select nine matched pairs of schools. The study population included all schools with third grades from the same 12 districts used in LSES-II, as well as a large urban district. The total study population consisted of 345 schools. The 13 school districts were located in various geographical areas and represented a variety of population and economic compositions indicative of the state of Louisiana.

Regression models similar to those from LSES-II were used to select schools for LSES-III. A school was considered for inclusion in the study based on three criteria. A school became a candidate for study if the school scored above prediction (+ residual score) both testing years or below prediction (- residual score) both testing years. Consideration was also

given to any school that scored substantially above or below prediction at least one testing year. Finally, a school became a study candidate if a matching outlier having an opposite direction residual score and similar SES composition could be identified within the specific school system (or in a contiguous system consisting of small rural districts).

Once the potential pairs of schools were identified based on the previously mentioned criteria, selection began within a number of constraints. First, of the pairs selected, three pairs were to be from rural areas, three from small city or suburban areas, and three from urban areas. Second, the pairs must be from northern, central, and southern regions of the state. Also, the study sample had to include pairs of predominantly minority, predominantly majority, and mixed student populations. Finally, no school system could contribute more than one pair to the sample. (One exception was made to allow the study of a pair of extended-day program schools.)

Based upon the previously mentioned selection criteria and constraints, nine pairs of schools were chosen for the study sample. Upon observation, the third grade status in one school proved to be anomalous within the school and it, along with its comcomitant opposite, was omitted from the sample, leaving eight matched pairs.

Effective Schooling Characteristics Generalizable Across SES Contexts

Data from many studies, including the LSES, indicate that there are a number of characteristics of effective schools that should be found regardless of the SES of the school. These include: 1) focus on academics as first priority of the school, 2) positive academic climate as perceived by students, 3) high academic engaged time-on-task, and 4) safe and orderly environment.

In LSES-II, schools that obtained the lowest student achievement relative to prediction provided a mixed message on goals (e.g., achievement is the most important goal of our school... and so is student self-concept and social development and...). Everything can't be most important, and principals from both middle- and low-SES effective schools felt academics were the first priority.

In schools achieving above prediction in LSES-II, almost all

students reported that teachers and peers cared about grades. Very few of these students felt that their peers would tease them if they made good grades. In these same schools, principals reported a strong sense of school success. These results were found for both middle- and low-SES effective schools indicating that a positive academic climate was perceived by students regardless of the SES context of the school.

In LSES-II, principals in effective schools estimated that their students spent forty more minutes per day in reading than was estimated by principals in ineffective schools. Over six hundred hours of classroom observations in LSES-III confirmed this finding. Effective schools had significantly higher percentage of time-on-task behavior in their classrooms than did ineffective schools. This finding occurred across both middle- and low-SES schools.

Observation in both LSES-II and -III indicated that safe and orderly environments were necessary for effective schooling, regardless of the SES context of the schools themselves. While such environments are prerequisite for effective schooling regardless of SES context, our observations in LSES-III indicate that the process for getting there is different in middle-SES as opposed to to low-SES schools. Particularly in inner-city low-SES schools, substantial amounts of planning and on-going investments of time and other scarce resources are often necessary to assure consistently safe environments for students and staff. For instance, at one effective low-SES school in LSES-III, several hours a day of teacher and aide time were spent monitoring the school hall and yard for intruders. This policy came after a violent crime was committed against a student on the school yard during the previous year. Such surveillance was not typically necessary in effective middle-SES schools observed in the LSES.

Characteristics Associated with Effectiveness in Middle- and Low-SES Schools

While there are definite similarities between effective middle- and low-SES schools, there are a number of very interesting differences between the two groups of schools. Our research indicates that effective schools have implemented somewhat different strategies, depending on the SES context of the particular school under examination. Characteristics associated with effectiveness in middle- and low-SES schools are found in Table 1.

LSES-II results indicated a difference in future educational expectations by teachers in effective middle- and low-SES schools. Teachers in effective middle-SES schools held very high future and present educational expectations for their students, while teachers in effective low-SES schools held high present, but more modest future educational expectations. While principals and teachers in effective low-SES schools had modest long-term expectations for their students' achievement, particularly in regard to higher education, they held firm academic expectations for their students while at their schools.

Results from recent research in California (Hallinger & Murphy, 1986) confirm these differences with regard to teacher expectations. The teacher expectations results are particularly interesting since previous school effectiveness models (Brookover & Lezotte, 1979; Edmonds, 1981) call for uniformly high expectations as a cornerstone for effective schooling.

To further illustrate this point, the pattern of means from LSES-II for one question dealing with teachers' expectations is presented in Table 2. An interesting trend can be seen in this data. There is an exaggerated difference in teacher expectation for the ineffective middle-SES group as opposed to the effective low-SES group. This occurs despite the fact that the effective low-SES group actually outachieved the ineffective middle-SES group. The teachers of students in the ineffective middle-SES group think their students will go much further in school than do teachers from the effective low-SES group.

Even though teachers from the low-SES effective group didn't believe their students would go as far in school as other groups, they managed to instill the belief in their students that they could achieve. The students in the low-SES effective group not only believed they could achieve well at the third grade level, but also that they could do well in later schooling. The teachers in the low-SES effective schools apparently got the message to their students that they could achieve by concentrating on present, rather than future success in school. If the students were told they could achieve at the third grade level, they extrapolated that they could achieve in later schooling. The students believed this even though their teachers were concentrating on present expectations and had doubts about future expectations.

The second difference between effective middle- and low-SES

schools concerns the visibility and importance of the external reward structure of the schools. In several of the effective, low-SES schools in LSES-III, we repeatedly encountered public displays of individual academic achievement. For example, honor rolls were highly visible outside the principals' offices, academic awards ceremonies took place, and excellent student work was displayed everywhere. The principals in these effective low-SES schools spent a greater proportion of their time developing and maintaining external rewards as opposed to the principals in effective middle-SES schools.

A major difference between effective low-SES and middle-SES schools on this reward structure dimension has to do with the overtness of the display. In one effective low-SES school observed in LSES-III, there were academic slogans on signs throughout the building. Examples of the slogans included: "The only thing more expensive than education is IGNORANCE" and "The smaller your education, the smaller your paycheck." Such overt symbols were typically not found in middle-SES schools, partially because principals and staff there knew rewards for academic achievement were more likely to be found at home. For example, data from LSES-II indicated that teachers in effective middle-SES schools perceived the students' parents to be highly concerned with quality education.

A third difference between effective low-SES and middle-SES schools in LSES-II revolves around principals' characteristics. As was the case with teachers, principals exhibited significantly different opinions regarding their students' academic future in low- and middle-SES effective schools.

Principals in the effective low-SES schools projected that a smaller percentage of their students would finish high school than any of the other groups. They also indicated that fewer parents from their schools believed that their children would obtain college degrees. This occurred in spite of the facts that their students were scoring well above expectation and that their students believed they would go far in school.

The principals, like their teachers, see students in these low-SES effective schools making modest gains through the hard work of the school, almost in spite of the parents and local community. In contrast, the principals in effective middle-SES schools projected that a larger percentage of their students would finish high school and that a higher percentage of the students' parents believed their children would graduate from

college than any of the other groups.

These differences in attitudes on the part of the middle- and low-SES principals were reflected in their behavior at their schools. Teachers reported that principals in low-SES effective schools observed their classes an average of 2.4 hours per semester. Teachers in effective middle-SES schools reported only 1.4 hours of observation per semester. Additionally, teachers in effective low-SES schools reported the greatest frequency of principal assistance in academic matters. The reported frequency of principal assistance in academic matters was less in effective middle-SES schools than in effective low-SES schools. It appears that principals in effective middle-SES schools allow teachers greater responsibility for and ownership of instructional leadership. We have speculated that principals in effective low-SES schools tend to be initiators regarding academic programs within the school, while those in effective middle-SES schools tend to be managers of the academic programs to use Hall and Griffin's (1982) terminology.

A fourth difference between effective low-SES and middle-SES schools has to do with the contact between the school and the community. In LSES-II, teachers in effective middle-SES schools were in frequent contact with parents and perceived the parents as being highly concerned with quality education. This was not the case in effective low-SES schools where teachers and principals perceived parents not to be very involved with the education of their children. The students in these effective low-SES schools saw their teachers as the adults who were pushing them very hard to succeed.

Results from Hallinger and Murphy's (1986) research confirm this difference between effective low- and high-SES schools in California. The principals in effective low-SES schools in their study tended to protect the boundaries of their schools from the intrusions of the low income community surrounding them. On the other hand, principals in effective high-SES schools were more informal and less concerned about controlling and monitoring instruction. In general, according to Hallinger and Murphy, the effective high-SES principal worked to involve the community in the school, thus taking advantage of high parental expectations for success.

A fifth difference between low-SES and middle-SES schools has to do with principals' authority in selecting staff and with the characteristics of the staff s/he selects. Data on this

issue from LSES-II are found in Table 3. Principals in effective low-SES schools were the most likely of any group to say that they had major input in hiring their own teachers. Twenty-three percent of the principals in this group said that they hired their own teachers. Only eight percent of the principals in effective middle-SES schools reported this authority.

Additionally, the teachers in the low-SES effective schools were the least experienced of the groups of low-SES schools; that is, they had less experience teaching third grade and teaching in their school than did the typical low-SES or ineffective low-SES groups. This indicates that principals with hiring authority in low-SES schools might seek out younger, possibly more idealistic teachers for their schools. The opposite holds true for the middle-SES schools where the least experienced group of teachers were found in the ineffective schools.

The sixth difference between effective low-SES and middle-SES schools has to do with curricular offerings. Hallinger and Murphy (1986) found a narrower focus on basic skills in the effective low-SES schools and a broader curricular emphasis in the effective higher-SES schools in their study. Observations from effective low-SES and middle-SES schools in LSES-II and -III tend to confirm these conclusions. On the other hand, our observations indicate that the narrow focus on basic skills in effective low-SES schools was also found at typical and ineffective low-SES schools.

Conclusion

We believe that the field of school effectiveness is rapidly maturing. One indicator of that maturity is the ability to make more refined, contextually sensitive observations about schools.

SES correlates of student achievement have been documented for decades. School alterable correlates have been identified within the past ten years.

The LSES researchers and others in this symposium are now exploring the interactions of those two sets of correlates. They are finding that while some main effects occur, interactions between SES and school alterable variables are equally important. The implications for practice in the understanding of these variables are considerable.

Table 1

Characteristics Associated with Effectiveness in Middle- and Low-SES Schools

	Middle-SES Schools		Low-SES Schools
1.	Promote both high present and future educational expectations.	1.	Promote high present educational expectations. Be sure that the students believe that they can perform well at their current grade level. Allow high future educational goals to develop later.
2.	De-emphasize visible external rewards for academic achievement. Such rewards should be unnecessary if an adequate orientation is found at home. Taking time from school for providing rewards may take away from valuable class time.	2.	Increase the external reward structure for academic achievement. Make high achieving students feel special.
3.	Hire principals with good managerial abilities. Increase teacher responsibility for and ownership of instructional leadership.	3.	Hire principals who are initiators, who want to make changes in the schools. Encourage a more active role for the principal in monitoring classrooms and providing overall instructional leadership.
4.	Increase contact with the community. Encourage parents with high educational expectations to exert a press for school achievement.	4.	Carefully evaluate the effect of the community on the school. If the community does not exert a positive press for school achievement, create boundaries to buffer the school from negative influences.
5.	Hire more experienced teachers.	5.	Hire younger, possibly more idealistic teachers. Give the principal more authority in selecting her/his own staff.
6.	Expand curricular offerings beyond the basic skills.	6.	Focus on basic skills first and foremost with other offerings after they have been mastered.

Table 2

Teacher Expectations for Likelihood of Students Attending College

		Socioeconomic Characteristics of Students' Parents	
		Middle SES	Low SES
School's Performance Relative to Expectation	Effective	2.81	4.12
	Typical	3.43	3.50
	Ineffective	3.19	3.95

Note: Smaller numbers indicate a higher expectation for the students. The specific values for the scale are as follows: one = 90% or more, two = 70 to 89%, three = 50 to 69%, four = 30 to 49%, and five = less than 30%.

Table 3

Percentage of Principals Who Make Hiring Decisions on Teachers

		Socioeconomic Characteristics of Students' Parents	
		Middle SES	Low SES
School's Performance Relative to Expectation	Effective	8%	23%
	Typical	0%	9%
	Ineffective	0%	0%

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